

WHAT SO ★ PROUDLY ★ WE HAIL

The American Soul in Story, Speech, and Song

Our National Thanksgiving

SARAH JOSEPHA BUELL HALE

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In this 1858 editorial from Godey's Lady's Book, its editor Sarah Josepha Buell Hale appeals directly, this time in her own name, for a national day of Thanksgiving. After opening with two stanzas of the Protestant hymn "Praise to God, Immortal Praise," which indicates the things for which we should offer "grateful vows and solemn praise," Hale offers the reasons for and benefits of having a national day of thanksgiving. What are those reasons and benefits? Why does she say that Thanksgiving Day would be (is) a "truly American Festival," or that the last Thursday in November "will become a day of AMERICAN THANKSGIVING throughout the world"? What is the connection between giving thanks and acts of charity? Between both and national unity and harmony? What is the relation between the hymn and Hale's argument for nationalizing the holiday? Is Thanksgiving Day a religious or political holiday?

"All the blessings of the fields,
All the stores the garden yields,
All the plenty summer pours,
Autumn's rich, o'erflowing stores,
Peace, prosperity, and health,
Private bliss and public wealth,
Knowledge with its gladdening streams,
Pure religion's holier beams—
Lord, for these our souls shall raise
Grateful vows and solemn praise."

We are most happy to agree with the large majority of the governors of the different States—as shown in their unanimity of action for several past years, and which, we hope, will this year be adopted by all—that THE LAST THURSDAY IN NOVEMBER shall be the DAY OF NATIONAL THANKSGIVING for the American people. Let this day, from this time forth, as long as our Banner of Stars floats on the breeze, be the grand THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY of our nation, when the noise and tumult of worldiness may be exchanged for the laugh of happy children, the glad greetings of family reunion, and the humble gratitude of the Christian heart. This truly American Festival falls, this year on the *twenty-fifth day of this month.*

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Let us consecrate the day to benevolence of action, by sending good gifts to the poor, and doing those deeds of charity that will, for one day, make every American home the place of plenty and of rejoicing. These seasons of refreshing are of inestimable advantage to the popular heart; and if rightly managed, will greatly aid and strengthen public harmony of feeling. Let the people of all the States and Territories sit down together to the “feast of fat things,” and drink, in the sweet draught of joy and gratitude to the Divine giver of all our blessings, the pledge of renewed love to the Union, and to each other; and of peace and good-will to all men. *Then the last Thursday in November will soon become the day of AMERICAN THANKSGIVING throughout the world.*

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